

which time Lowes took over, starting a long succession of different owners. All brought significant changes to the Allen, from its structure to the actual performances that took place inside it. From 1972–76, it played host to many soon-to-be-famous rockers who were looking to showcase their acts, such as the BeeGees, Cheech & Chong and the rock band KISS.

After a brief "dark-out", the Allen came alive again with a techno-entertainment show called the Laserium that lasted only a year, after which the theater closed its doors for 16 years. But after a long struggle, the Playhouse Square Foundation received the support to save this historic landmark from demolition by signing a 20-year lease to handle its operations. It presented the cabaret show "Forever Plaid" which was met with great success. Officials chose to remodel the theater's stage and make it conducive to long-running musicals like Phantom of the Opera and Showboat.

My fellow colleagues, please join me in honoring the Allen Theater during this time of great celebration. Its grand re-opening marks a new beginning for this grand institution. Despite much adversity, it will continue to give us the magic of theater long into the future.

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE EMPOWERMENT ZONE ENHANCEMENT AND RURAL ENTERPRISE COMMUNITIES ACT

**HON. MAURICE D. HINCHEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 1, 1998*

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleague Mr. WATKINS of Oklahoma to introduce legislation aimed at securing funding for Round II of the Empowerment Zone program. Last year's Taxpayer Relief Act authorized the designation of 20 new Empowerment Zones—15 in urban cities and 5 in rural areas—but did not provide any funding for these communities. The bill we are introducing tonight builds on a measure we introduced earlier this year to expand the rural program—the Rural Enterprise Communities Act (H.R. 4071)—to include funding for the 15 urban empowerment zones.

The flexible funding for EZs and ECs is so important because it gives communities the ability to participate directly with their private sector partners in development projects. The communities leverage these funds many times over, using them as seed capital to attract resources from the private sector, non-profit organizations, foundations, universities, churches, and government agencies. Without the funding in place, it will be very difficult for the new empowerment zones to begin implementing their comprehensive strategic development plans.

In addition, we believe that the rural side of this program must be expanded. The Taxpayer Relief Act only authorized five rural empowerment zones. To date, more than 250 communities have notified USDA that they will be competing for these designations. Our bill recognizes the significance of this program for distressed rural communities and allows the USDA to designate an additional 33 enterprise communities in rural areas.

We need to act quickly to ensure that the new EZs and ECs are funded at the beginning

of their life cycle when it will do the most good. I have attached a summary of the Empowerment Zone Enhancement and Rural Enterprise Communities Act, and urge my colleagues to support this important measure.

#### THE EMPOWERMENT ZONE ENHANCEMENT AND RURAL ENTERPRISE COMMUNITIES ACT

Section 2(a), (b). Selection of Additional Enterprise Communities. This section expands Round II of the EZ/EC competition to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to designate 33 rural enterprise communities. The EC designations are in addition to the five rural and 15 urban empowerment zones authorized by the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997. In addition, this section extends the filing deadline until January 1, 2000 for communities to apply for a new EC designation.

Section 2(c). Modification of Eligibility Criteria for Rural Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. Poverty is still the main criteria for a rural EZ/EC designation. This section gives the Secretary the discretionary authority to consider other significant factors that contribute to distress in rural communities that are not as prevalent in urban areas. These include: Emigration; Underemployment; Rise in unemployment caused by the federal government, such as a military base closure; and Sudden economic dislocation that causes significant job loss, such as a plant closure.

In addition, this section clarifies that for communities that otherwise meet all of the program's eligibility criteria, the Secretary may exempt sites that will be developed for commercial and industrial purposes from the poverty criteria as long as they do not exceed 2,000 acres or contain more than three non-contiguous parcels.

Section 2(d), (e). Use of Bond Proceeds. The Taxpayer Relief Act authorized EZs to issue "new empowerment facility bonds" that are exempt from the state's tax-exempt bond cap, and also created a new type of "zone academy bond" to finance school construction in these communities. This section specifies that: Issues of new empowerment zone facility bonds must be consistent with the EZ's strategic plan to receive the special treatment; Rural ECs designated in the Round II competition may not issue zone facility bonds; The comprehensive education plan required to issue zone academy bonds must not be inconsistent with the EZ's strategic plan; and At least 25 percent of the zone academy bonds must be allocated to rural EZs.

Section 3(a), (b). Recognition and Incentives for Top Performing EZs and ECs. This section directs the Secretaries of Housing and Urban Development and Agriculture to recognize top-performing EZs and ECs annually. Top performing Round I ECs that otherwise meet all the program's eligibility criteria will be given priority in the Round II EZ competition.

Section 3(c). Continuation Funding for Top Performing Round I EZs and ECs. This section allows HHS to set aside up to 10 percent, of the funds for the Round II EZs (\$150 million for urban, \$10 million for Rural). Round I EZs and ECs that have completed or made satisfactory progress toward implementing their strategic plans will be eligible to compete for these funds at the direction of USDA and HUD.

Section 4(a)–(d). Funding for Round II EZs and ECs. EZ/EC program funds are distributed through the Social Services Block Grant (Title XX). The President's budget allocates \$1.7 bil-

lion for the Round II empowerment zones (\$1.5 billion for urban and \$200 million for rural). This section divides those funds to provide: Urban EZs an annual grant of up to \$10 million for the next 10 years for a total of as much as \$100 million; Rural EZs an annual grant of up to \$2 million for the next 10 years for a total of as much as \$20 million; and Rural ECs two grants of \$1.5 million for the next two years for a total \$3 million.

Section 4(e). Rural Community Planning Grants. To help rural communities prepare their strategic plans during the application process, this section designates \$1 million for 100 community planning grants of up to \$10,000 each.

Section 5. Responsibility for Environmental Review. The National Environmental Policy Act requires every federal agency that administers a program funded through grants to states, such as the Title XX Social Services Block Grant, to determine, among other things, whether the program will have any adverse effects on the environment. The Department of Health and Human Services—which releases the SSBG funds to the states for EZs and ECs—is currently required to make this environmental review for EZ/EC grants, even though it is not responsible for selecting the communities or approving their strategic plans. This section transfers responsibility for conducting the NEPA reviews to HUD for urban areas and to USDA for rural areas. It also gives the Secretaries the authority to delegate this responsibility to state and local governments and tribal authorities under certain conditions.

Section 6. Performance Measurement and Evaluation. This section requires HUD and USDA to make regular evaluations of the Round II EZ's and EC's progress toward implementing their strategic plans, according to a performance measurement system established by the Secretaries. This section also give HUD and USDA authority to adjust, reduce, or cancel a zone's or community's grant for poor performance.

Section 7. Distribution of Surplus Government Property. This section allows USDA to distribute surplus government property (computers, vans, construction equipment, etc.) to rural EZs, ECs, and champion communities on preferred basis.

Section 8. Effective Dates. In general, the amendments made by this bill take effect as if passed as part of the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICING

**HON. MARION BERRY**

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 1, 1998*

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an issue of importance to everyone across this country, especially our seniors.

Let me start by telling you about an 81-year-old woman. Her name is Mary Carson, who lives in my District in Jonesboro. She is presently taking 10 prescription drugs to treat blood blots, blood pressure, nervousness, and arthritis. Although Medicaid covers the cost of some of her prescription drugs, Ms. Carson still spends \$80 to \$200 monthly on her medications—up to almost half of her monthly income. Ms. Carson's only source of income is

her \$416 Social Security check. Because of the high costs. Ms. Carson has had to skip or cut back on medications. She is only taking half of her prescribed blood thinner, and has had to skip her arthritis medicine because she was not able to fill the prescription.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Ms. Carson's problem is a common one for seniors across my District and across the country. Because of the high cost of prescription drugs, seniors often have to take half of what the doctor has told them to. Because of the high cost of prescription drugs, seniors often have to choose between taking their medicine and paying for food or their electricity. And because of the high cost of prescription drugs, our seniors are dying because they are too proud to ask their children to help them buy their medication.

Studies that have been done for several Members of Congress, including myself, over the last several months have shown, the prices seniors and other consumers are charged are on the average 106 percent more than what pharmaceutical companies charge their favored customers such as HMOs, insurance companies and the Federal Government. This just doesn't seem fair to me when you think about the fact that according to Industry ratings of Fortune 500 companies—pharmaceutical companies are the most profitable businesses in existence. They made \$24.5 billion in profits last year. Pharmaceutical companies had a 17.2 percent return on revenues. Telecommunication companies, 8.1 percent; computers and office equipment manufacturers, 7.3 percent; food and drug stores made a whopping 1.7 percent.

One might think the success of pharmaceutical companies would be of tremendous benefit to American consumers. The reward: This year consumers have faced the highest two, monthly increases in prescription drug prices on record.

Earlier this week, I chaired the first meeting of the Prescription Drug Task Force because of the increasing importance of the issue. Also, last week I introduced legislation with Congressman TOM ALLEN that would allow senior citizens who are Medicare beneficiaries to purchase prescription drugs at the low prices available to Federal agencies under the Federal Supply Schedule.

For the remainder of this session of Congress and continuing into the 106th Congress, the task force will work to bring attention to issues involving the costs and availability of prescription drugs. The task force will serve the purpose of complementing our legislation and is open to finding new policy recommendations. It will be an advocate for consumers and ensuring competition within the industry.

All Members of Congress should stop and think about the blatant unfairness seniors face every day when they go to purchase their prescription drugs—medication they need to stay well and to stay alive. This is not an issue that will just go away. We should stand up for our seniors who are getting ripped off by pharmaceutical companies and ensure that they are not charged more than they should be for their medication.

## CHRIST CHURCH OF ACCOKEEK 300TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY

### HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 1, 1998*

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 300th Anniversary of Christ Church of Accokeek, Maryland, built by the Church of England, and one of six pre-Revolutionary War churches. It is believed this church congregation held their first prayer meetings sometime in 1698 in private homes with their first formal church structure being built a few years later.

Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you can imagine, Christ Church has weathered countless trials and tribulations through its 300 years of existence. Early settlers triumphed over the harshness of the 1700's, the separation from the Church of England, and the invasion of troops during the War of 1812. Christ Church's survival over the decades shows the uniqueness of the community of Accokeek.

In 300 years of existence there have been vast changes in liturgical theologies. In the early days the dictates of theology permitted no music, no stained glass or colored windows and only box type pews. Today, Christ Church radiates this same simplicity and symmetry with the addition of beautiful stained glass, music, conventional pews, and a bell tower. The ornate Holy Services offered now at Christ Church are a reflection of strong roots and faith of its members. A quality that has been strong enough to trickle down and bless the numerous generations of this Maryland community.

Christ Church makes a rich contribution to the history of Maryland and our great Nation. It sits as a symbol of the great sacrifices made by the early settlers to exercise their religious beliefs and through the years the clergy has worked tirelessly to minister to the people of the region during good times and bad.

Christ Church has seen years and years of families and neighbors coming together for convocations and picnics, weddings and funerals, for comfort and direction. In the words of an early Accokeek resident, Mr. Henry Williams (1862–1936) on speaking of the importance of this church to the community, "I think it has quite a bright future before it—good roads, good schools, and a dear old church."

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, please join with me in wishing this "dear old church", the Christ Church of Accokeek, congratulations on their 300th Year Anniversary.

## TRIBUTE TO BOBBY RUSH

### HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 1, 1998*

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and congratulate a dear and close friend of mine, the national and international known Mr. Bobby Rush. On November 9 at the House of Blues in Los Angeles, California, Bobby Rush will receive the Blue Foundation's second annual "B.B. King Blues Hero" Award during the Lifetime Achievement Ceremony.

The B.B. King Blues Hero Award was established in 1997 by the Blues Foundation to recognize a Blues artist whose career has been characterized by community service and charitable activity. As the recipient of the award, Bobby will receive an honorarium, as is characteristic of his goodness and concern for young people, is donating his honorarium to a program to provide computers for Mississippi classrooms.

While Bobby Rush is known for his amazing stage show and outstanding performances on the 21 releases that span his career, few people know of Rush's dedication to his community in Jackson, Mississippi. For years Bobby has taken time off the road to use his tour bus to transport people to the polls on Election Day, participates in voter registration drives, and encourages young people to be civic minded and help in their communities, which I truly appreciate. He also has played functions to raise money for sickle cell anemia research, child care, school band uniforms, and musical equipment for local students.

Bobby Rush promotes the Blues by participating in the Blues in the Schools programs nationwide. During Black History Month, Bobby visits schools throughout Mississippi and Alabama. He also volunteers his own home as an emergency shelter for children leaving the Hinds County Youth Correctional Facility in Raymond, Mississippi.

With professional accomplishments and personal acts of humanitarianism such as these, I am truly proud and honored to stand here and extend congratulations to my friend Mr. Bobby Rush. He is truly a credit to America, his community, and his art.

## HONORING MR. BENJAMIN S. PURSER, JR. FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION AND THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

### HON. BOB CLEMENT

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 1, 1998*

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Mr. Benjamin S. Purser, Jr. and his service to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Department of Justice.

Mr. Purser will retire from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), after twenty-eight years of faithful service, on October 3, 1998. He will be greatly missed.

Mr. Purser, a native Tennessean, now serves as a Senior Supervisory Resident Agent for the agency in Nashville, with oversight responsibility for all operations and investigations in Middle Tennessee. He began his career with the FBI in 1970, and following training, was assigned to offices in Baltimore, Maryland, and New York City. During his ten years in New York, Mr. Purser was assigned to the Organized Crime Division where he earned significant investigation expertise relating to white-collar and violent crime, and health care fraud.

Mr. Purser gained notoriety throughout the South in the late 1980's and early 1990's, when he supervised "Rocky Top," a sensitive and complicated undercover investigation of public corruption, which focused on abuse of